

## Virginia - Naturally

The Commonwealth of Virginia is one of the most beautiful states in the U.S. We have it all here; access to the ocean, bays and rivers, mountains, and caverns. Life here can move as fast (Northern Virginia) or as slow (Poquoson) as we wish; and our rich history surrounds us each day. A large part of what keeps Virginia great is our commitment to the environment.

Protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility. At NASA LaRC, we practice research excellence *and* environmental stewardship; and together we all make a positive difference. It doesn't matter what you choose to do, recycle in your community, use non-toxic chemical alternatives, ride the bus or plant trees, it all adds up to make a difference.

### Here are 15 Ways to Help Virginia's Environment:\*

- 1. Get involved -- Become an environmental steward.** Volunteer in your community and help manage local natural, cultural, recreational and historic resources. Call the Virginia Council for Litter Prevention and Recycling at (804) 476-3308 or Keep Virginia Beautiful at (804) 355-0085 for ideas on cleaning up a community street, park or playground.
- 2. Be a smart driver.** Your car's exhaust may contribute to ozone smog in Virginia's major urban areas. Keep your car tuned and its pollution control equipment working properly. Combine shopping with other errands to avoid unnecessary car trips.
- 3. Plant a tree for the future.** Trees cool our cities, filter the air, buffer noise and provide homes and food for wildlife. Their leaves produce life-giving oxygen, and their roots reduce erosion and absorb pollutants. Organize a tree-planting day in your community or participate in an adopt-a-tree program.
- 4. Reduce and reuse waste.** On average, each Virginian throws away 4.4 pounds of solid waste every day, contributing to a statewide total of about 13,600 tons of trash a day. Reduce the amount of trash you throw away. Choose products with a minimum of packaging or find other uses rather than throwing it away. Use a plastic bread bag as a lunch bag or a milk container as a planter.
- 5. Recycle at work and home.** Virginians recycled about 33 percent of their recyclable waste, or 2.9 million tons. Did you do your share? Contact your local government to find out what recycling services are available to your community.
- 6. Prevent pollution.** Use nature's cleaners or household chemical products properly. Many household products -- paints, solvents, cleansers and pesticides -- are hazardous. Be careful when using chemical products: Read the label, buy only as much as you need and use it for the purpose intended. Inquire about a community household hazardous collection day.
- 7. Save water.** Water is a valuable commodity. No matter where you live, water conservation can save money on your water bill or extend the life of your septic system. Repair leaky faucets. And use water sparingly when brushing your teeth and washing dishes. Take short showers instead of baths, and install low-flow showerheads and toilet dams.
- 8. Save household energy.** Wise energy use preserves non-renewable resources, protects air quality and saves money. Lower (in winter) or raise (in summer) your thermostat at night or when no one is home. Use fans when practical -- they use one-tenth the energy of an air

conditioner. Turn off lights not in use. Weatherize your home by caulking windows, weather stripping doors, insulating the roof, insulate your hot water heater and turn down the temperature setting.

- 9. Enhance healthy wildlife habitat.** Benefit birds and butterflies in your backyard. Provide food and habitat for songbirds by putting up birdhouses and feeders and by planting trees and bushes that birds use as shelter, food sources and nesting sites. If you hunt or fish, be mindful of other resource users and only harvest what you plan to use. If your goal is to locate "watchable" wildlife, observe them from an appropriate distance, and don't disturb nests of any kind.



- 10. Be a responsible park visitor.** Enjoy Virginia's parks, but remember to respect the outdoors. When hiking, carry a bag and pick up litter. Stay on marked trails -- trail locations are designed to minimize impacts on the environment. By taking a shortcut, you could damage sensitive habitat and increase soil erosion.

- 11. Be an environmentally aware boater.** Slow down -- boat wakes cause erosion, create shoals and stir up sediments. Cloudy water then blocks sunlight essential to aquatic plant life. Keep trash aboard in a closed container and dispose of it properly when back on shore. And don't discharge boat sewage into our waterways. Empty portable toilets at approved dump stations.
- 12. Value wetlands.** Wetlands are bogs, marshes or swamps -- both tidal and inland -- that offer valuable fish and wildlife habitat, purify water resources, trap and filter pollutants, and help control soil erosion. Support and encourage constructed wetlands when and where they enhance nature.
- 13. Be involved in your community government.** Your community development should reflect the values and priorities of its residents. Be a part of the solution for making sure your community's comprehensive plan respects citizen involvement.
- 14. Give the Bay a hand.** The Chesapeake Bay drains nearly two-thirds of Virginia, and its restoration requires the help of all of us. Learn more about your local watershed and "BayScaping" -- landscaping that encourages conservation, diversity and beneficial plants -- as well as other tips by calling 1 (800) 662-CRIS.

- 15. Be a smart Virginia traveler.** When vacationing, or just traveling to another part of the state, remember to practice the good stewardship tactics that you employ at home. You'd hate it if a stranger came into your neighborhood and left a mess. Carry litterbags with you, and keep glass and paper separate. Many gas stations and rest stops have recycling bins in which you can deposit recyclables.



These are tips you can use in your day-to-day life to help Virginia's environment. They are also simple ways to do your part to help keep Virginia beautiful.

For more information, or to GET INVOLVED!, follow the links below:

- Virginia Naturally (<http://www.vanaturally.com/>)
- HR Clean (<http://www.hrclean.org/index.shtml>)
- Keep America Beautiful (<http://www.kab.org/>)

\*Excerpt from VA DEQ's Information Center (<http://www.deq.state.va.us/info/25ways.html>)